

via fax 011 503 2523 7402/7170  
**Lic. Astor Escalante Saravia**  
Acting Attorney General of El Salvador

via email: [carlosascencio@pnc.gob.sv](mailto:carlosascencio@pnc.gob.sv)  
**Comisionado Carlos Ascencio Giron**  
Director of the National Civil Police of El Salvador

September 21, 2009

Dear Sirs:

We continue to be extremely concerned for the safety of human rights activists in Cabañas department following the torture and murder of Gustavo Marcelo Rivera (cf our letter of Aug. 1) who opposed deadly mining projects that could have a negative impact on the people and the environment. On August 7, **Ramiro Rivera**, a community leader who has also campaigned against gold mining in the area, was shot eight times outside his home in Cabañas.

On July 24, death threats in anonymous letters and SMS text messages were received by three broadcasters on Radio Victoria in Cabañas: **Jose Alexander Beltrán Castillo**, age 19, **Ludwin Franklin Iraheta**, age 20, and **Vladimir Abarca Ayala**, age 16. They had reported on Gustavo Marcelo Rivera's killing. One message said, "You are also on the list...you saw what happened to [Marcelo] the next one is you."

On July 27, **Father Luis Quintanilla**, a Catholic priest in Cabañas, was on the same radio station calling for justice for Gustavo Marcelo Rivera. Driving home, he was forced off the road by a vehicle with four hooded gunmen who surrounded his car; he managed to escape unhurt. On August 4, community leader **Héctor Antonio Garcia Berrios** was warned that if he and Gustavo Marcelo Rivera's brother, **Miguel Rivera**, continued campaigning for justice for the murder, their lives would be at risk.

On July 29, **Antonio Pacheco**, Director of the Social and Economic Development Association of Santa Marta (ADES), received death threats. ADES has been campaigning against the negative consequences of gold mining in Cabañas and calling for justice in the killing of Gustavo Marcelo Rivera.

It is evident that the murder of Gustavo Marcelo Rivera and the subsequent threats and violence against those mentioned above are consequences of their activism regarding human rights violations, electoral fraud and the environmental effects of mining operations. We **therefore strongly urge** that you

- Provide José Alexander Beltrán Castillo, Ludwin Franklin Iraheta, Vladimir Abarca Ayala, Luis Quintanilla, Ramiro Rivera, Miguel Rivera and Hector Berrios with all necessary protection, according to their wishes;
- Carry out an independent investigation into recent threats and attacks against anti-mining and environmental activists, journalists, community and religious leaders in the department of Cabañas;
- Thoroughly and promptly investigate the abduction, torture and killing of Gustavo Marcelo Rivera, make the results public and bring to justice those responsible, including those who may have ordered the killing,

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Coordinator

cc: La Fundacion de Estudios para la Aplicación de Derecho, Human Rights Organization ~ via fax: 011 503 2236-1833  
Francisco Altshull, Charge d'Affaires, Embassy of El Salvador to the US ~ via fax: 1-202-234-3834  
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Hillary Thompson, El Salvador Desk at U.S. State Dept. ~ fax: 202-647-2597  
US Senators Brown & Voinovich ~ via email  
US Representatives Boccieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

UA 223/09\_El Salvador

**The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter:**